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**OPENING ADDRESS BY SCCCI PRESIDENT THOMAS CHUA FOR THE SAF DAY
COMBINED REDEDICATION CEREMONY**

Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence
Senior Officers
NSmen
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

We are gathered here today to show our commitment to the defence of our country. This is vital to our country's continued success, survival and progress.

Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew once said: “Without a strong economy, there can be no strong defence. Without a strong defence, there will be no Singapore.” Thus, when we gained independence in 1965, Singapore immediately invested considerable resources to build a strong defence. Through the introduction of National Service in 1967, we were able to enlist every able-bodied young man to serve with unity of purpose in the SAF, in defence of our nation.

From the very beginning, the SCCCI has pledged its support to National Service. When the first two batches of recruits were enlisted, the Chamber had given them a limited-edition medallion, on which was inscribed 尽忠报国 in Chinese and National Service in English.

Back in February 24 1968, the Chamber called a meeting at this very auditorium to raise funds for National Service and the Singapore Armed Forces. Almost 800 representatives from 382 business entities turned up on that day. Altogether, they donated more than \$160,000 on the spot. In the same year, the Chamber further helped to raise \$1.23 million towards national defence.

Singapore has come a very long way since then. Starting from the creation of the SAF in 1965, making do with what resources we had, we were eventually able to form a

strong, reliable, professional and very well-respected military force, to guarantee the safety and security of Singapore.

Hence, 48 years later, the SCCCI is very pleased to organise the SAF Day Combined Rededication Ceremony, in this same auditorium.

We have 87 companies from the Central Business District (CBD) and South Zone and more than 190 NSmen participating in today's event. We are honoured to have Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence here with us to celebrate this meaningful occasion.

SCCCI, like all the other companies represented here today, values the importance of having a robust defence force and the contributions made by NSmen to our society. It is the basis on which we, as one nation, are able to continue to grow harmoniously and strengthen economically, as we face the challenges of our future economy.

I was privileged to have been co-opted as co-chairman of ACCORD Employer and Business Council's Work Group, which focuses on SME Challenges and Opportunities in Support of NS. In an effort to increase employers' understanding and support of NSmen's commitments, especially in terms of reservist training, I invited MINDEF to share more during our monthly lunch meetings with Trade Associations. Through these monthly lunch meetings with the Trade Association leaders, MNDEF officers were able to update members on new developments in NS training, infrastructure and programmes. At the same time, these sessions allowed the business, including the SMEs, to understand reservist training and manage their manpower resources better.

This year, SCCCI is especially pleased and proud to have been given the opportunity to play host for the SAF Day Combined Rededication Ceremony. By doing so, it has given us a platform, not only to express the business community's support for the SAF and all NSmen, but also to demonstrate our commitment towards being a good corporate citizen.

With that, I wish to take this opportunity to thank Dr Ng Eng Hen for gracing us with his presence, all heads of companies, participants and their companies, as well as all members of the committee who have worked very hard to make this a success.

Thank you.